

kind of gratitude several of those that made without injury the earliest and the strongest impression. It is pleasing at a more advanced period to look again into the early favourites ; though the mature person may wonder how some of them had once power to absorb his passions, make him retire into a lonely wood in order to read unmolested, repel the approaches of sleep, or, when it came, infect it with visions. A capital part of the proposed task would be to recollect the books that have been read with the greatest interest, the periods when they were read, the partiality which any of them inspired, to a particular mode of life, to a study, to a system of opinions, or to a class of human characters; to note the counteraction of later ones (where we have been sensible of it) to the effect produced by the former ; and then to endeavour to estimate the whole and ultimate influence.

Considering the multitude of facts, sentiments, and characters, which have been contemplated by a person who has read much, the effect, one should think, must have been very great. Still, however, it is probable that a very small number of books will have the pre-eminence in our mental history. Perhaps your memory will promptly recur to six or ten that have contributed more to your present habits of feeling and thought than all the rest together.—It may be observed here, that when a few books of the same kind have pleased us emphatically, it is a possible ill consequence that they may create an almost exclusive taste, which is carried through all future reading, and is pleased only with books of that kind.

It might be supposed that the scenes of nature, an amazing assemblage of phenomena if their effect were not lost through familiarity, would have a powerful influence on opening minds, and transfuse into the internal economy of ideas and sentiment something of a character and a colour correspondent to the beauty, vicissitude, and grandeur, which press on the senses. They have this effect on minds of genius; and Beattie's *Minstrel* may be as just as it is a captivating description of the perceptions and emotions of such a spirit.* But on the greatest number this influence

* Beattie's famous poem of " The Minstrel " traces the progress of a poetical genius, born in a rude age, from the first dawning of fancy and reason, till that period at which he may be supposed capable of appearing in the world as a minstrel.